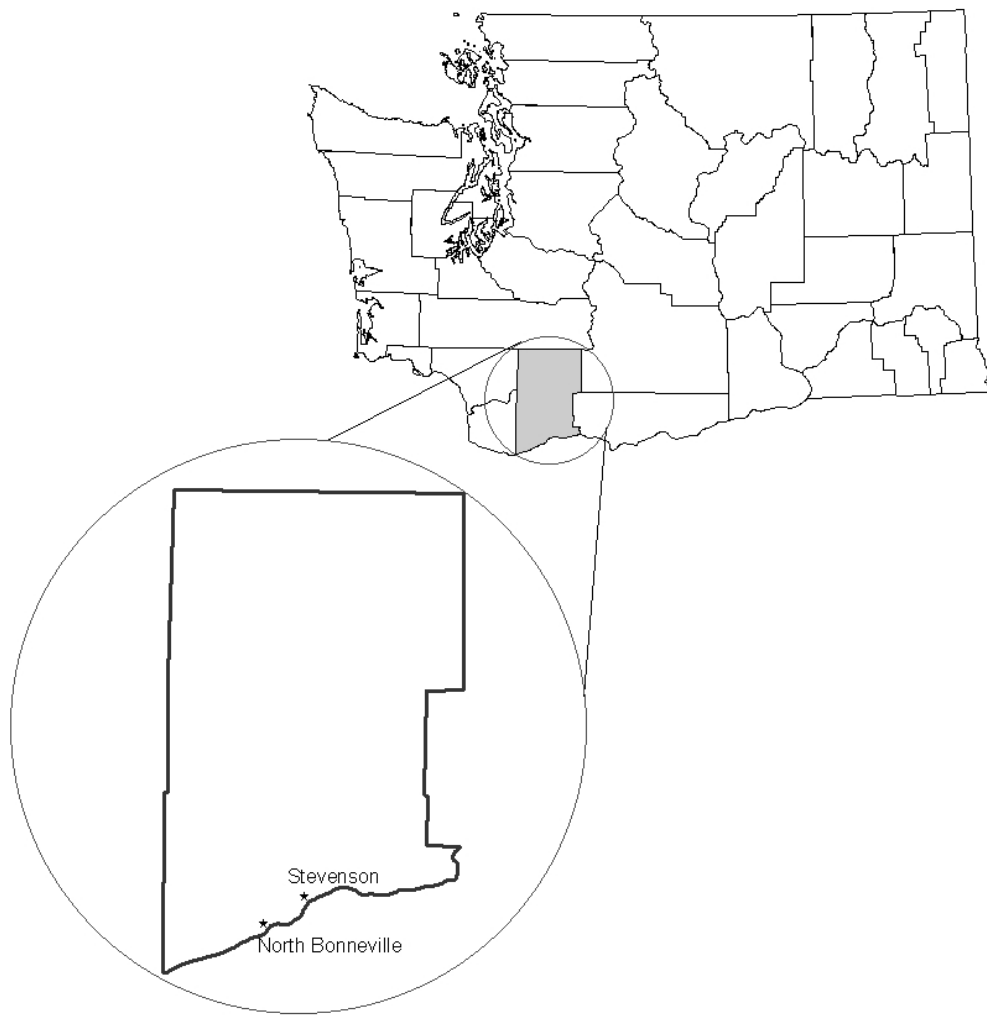


SKAMANIA COUNTY SECTION



Skamania County, Washington

SKAMANIA COUNTY

PROFILE

GEOGRAPHY

Skamania County is located in the southwestern part of the State of Washington, on the northern shore of the Columbia River. The County runs about forty miles east and west, along the Columbia River, and extends northward into the Cascade Mountains and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest for fifty miles. The Columbia River, at the southern boundary of Skamania County, flows nearly at sea level through the Cascade Mountains, on its way to the Pacific Ocean. This area is nationally recognized for its unique scenic beauty and serves as a major water and highway transportation corridor. The County has 1,672 square miles, ranking 24 out of 34 counties in the state.

The population of Skamania County is concentrated in the southern quarter of the County, along the Columbia River, and in the Wind River Valley. Stevenson, the county seat, lies approximately 45 miles northeast of Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington—twin cities on the river. The county's only other incorporated city is North Bonneville. Both are located on the Columbia River.

Skamania County has several diverse environments, ranging from the banks of the Columbia River, gently sloping lands near the river west of Stevenson, mountainous uplands extending to the river east of Stevenson, rugged, steep foothills to mountainous evergreen forest. The Cascade Mountains traverse Skamania County from north to south. Most of the county is heavily forested, with over 90 percent of the 1.1 million acres in public and private forest land. Western Skamania County has some upland farmland, and eastern Skamania County has some orchard lands—both are near the Columbia River.

In 1987, Congress established the 253,500 acre Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, which includes portions of Skamania County. The purpose of the scenic area is to protect and enhance the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge; to protect and support the economy of the region by encouraging growth to occur in designated urban areas; and by allowing compatible development in other areas. In Skamania County, the urban areas of Stevenson, Carson, North Bonneville, and Home Valley are exempt from the federal act.

CLIMATE

The climate of Skamania County is temperate and strongly influenced by topography. It is characterized by cool, dry summers, and mild, moist winters. Along the Columbia River, annual rainfall varies in an eastwardly direction—from 50 to 60 inches in the southwestern part of the county to more than 75 inches near the crest of the Cascade Mountain Range. East of this crest, rainfall decreases rapidly to about 35 inches in the southeast corner of the county. Precipitation is higher and temperatures lower with increasing elevation away from the Columbia River. The mountainous valleys in the interior of the county receive annual rainfall of greater than 90 inches.

SKAMANIA COUNTY

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Skamania County, located along the Columbia River and canvassed by the forested Cascade Mountains, has traditionally relied on timber products for its economic base. However, with the downslide in timber related sectors, the county's economy became stagnant during the eighties, resulting in closures of lumber and plywood mills, eliminating a large number of high paying jobs. Government has become the highest employment sector in the county, with the forest service and Bonneville Dam accounting for a majority of those jobs. Due to the declining timber industry, the county has pursued alternative sources of employment. Since the Gifford Pinchot National Forest encompasses a majority of Skamania County, along with the Columbia River National Scenic Area, economic opportunities are limited. The County has developed Skamania Lodge, a full service resort, to accommodate visitors as well as conventions to the National Scenic Area. The lodge has provided a number of employment opportunities in the service and retail trade sectors, which has improved the economy. The lodge has sparked growth in ancillary service and retail sales. However, these jobs pay less than the salaries of timber jobs being lost. Although lumber and wood products are on the decline, they will continue to play a large role in the county's economy. Recreation and tourism are increasingly key factors in the economy of the county.

AMENITIES

Skamania County has been blessed with a natural landscape that provides a number of recreational opportunities. The county encompasses portions of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Approximately 80 percent of the land area in Skamania County is within the national forest. These scenic areas provide abundant outdoor recreational opportunities for everyone to enjoy. The county has a rural atmosphere, with the small towns of Stevenson and North Bonneville and other rural centers such as Carson, Skamania, and Underwood. The economy is experiencing new growth with the completion of Skamania Lodge. The lodge is a world-class resort, offering fine dining and accommodations, along with golf and other amenities. Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington, are as close as a half hour from Skamania County. This urbanized area provides a number of metropolitan cultural activities.

Attractions are numerous in Skamania County, with Bonneville Dam, Carson Hot Springs, Beacon Rock, Mount St. Helens Volcanic Monument, Swift Reservoir, Cascade Mountains, and the Columbia River. Additionally, Skamania County is one of the premier locations for windsurfing in the Columbia Gorge. The Columbia Gorge, with its steady winds, offers numerous opportunities for world-class windsurfing.